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BAWDS AND MERCHANTS: ENGENDERING CAPITALIST DESIRES

BY LAURA MANDELL

In this paper, I will be discussing how Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* and *A Modest Defence of Publick STEWS* engender capitalist desires. By first gendering these desires female, these texts can scapegoat the figure of woman for morally repugnant aspects of capitalist pursuits. Such scapegoating engenders the desire to maximize profits not only by cleaning it off and rendering it morally respectable, but also by eroticizing the quest to capitalize on investment.[1] My larger reason for examining this scapegoating process is to try to understand how at certain moments feminist sentiment surfaces in what are otherwise antifeminist works of the period. I am not interested in whether Mandeville was a feminist, but rather in the contradictory conjunction of feminist arguments and misogynistic portrayals in his texts.[2] Mandeville's treatises were published during the time when several features of a market economy came into existence or became prominent (the Bank of England, Exchange Alley).[3] Therefore, this analysis will feed into the question of the relation between economics and the social construction of sexuality, specifically the way in which antifeminism comes to be conjoined with mercantile capitalism.[4]

As Laura Brown has demonstrated in her recent article, "Reading Race and Gender: Jonathan Swift," early eighteenth-century texts associate female desire with the desire to consume foreign products.[5] Not only in those mercantile tracts which deplored importing goods, but also in "Whig panegyrics" which celebrated trade, the desire to consume imports was rewritten as the female desire for fashion, for sexual attractiveness, hence as woman's inordinate sexual appetite. However, the notion that consumerism comes from woman's desire to be fashionably dressed, found everywhere in early eighteenth-century works, is in no way supported by historical fact: contrary to Swift's diatribe against Irish women importing silk for fashion, contrary to Addison's celebration of trade as a means of adorning women, we do not know who consumers were nor, by any stretch, what kind of desires provoked "the consumer revolution."[6]

Brown has shown that, in debates of the period, women's clothes implicitly stood for trading itself: fashion became "a synechdoche for

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mercantile capitalism." Whether or not they actually believed it, eighteenth-century writers represented female desire as the primary reason for mercantile expansion, and were then able to both idealize and revile a mystified version of trade's motive force.[7] Because Brown has already shown that consumerist desires were gendered female, I will begin this essay by discussing not the desire for profit, my eventual topic, but first literary representations of the desire to consume luxuries. I want to illustrate the scapegoating dynamic and suggest reasons for attendant moments of feminism.

I

Raymond Williams talks about representations of the desire to consume luxuries in early seventeenth-century literature. He finds portrayed in country-house poems like Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" a certain "willing and happy ethic of consuming [which is unaware of] the possible grossness of [such consumption]." There is a sense of "prolonged delight," he says, in "that easy, insatiable exploitation of the land and its creatures."[8] Later in the century, Williams maintains, people become much more self-conscious about the exorbitance of capitalist desires. Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees*, reprinted throughout the 1720s, partakes of this trend.[9] A great trading nation, Mandeville contends, consists in "Millions endeavoring to supply / Each other's Lust and Vanity" (1:18). The *Fable* represents unbridled consumerism as vicious, but defends it as a necessary evil: "They, that would revive / A Golden Age, must be as free, / For Acorns, as for Honesty" (1:37); those who preach against acquiring luxuries had better be ready for discomfort, he says.

Economists writing later in the century did not follow Mandeville's lead of portraying consumerism as a necessary evil, but rather, as Albert O. Hirschman has shown, tried to reconcile the desire for luxury with traditional notions of virtue.[10] Thus, in 1759, Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* portrays some forms of consumerism as bad and others as good: Smith says, "It is the great fallacy of Dr. Mandeville's book to represent every passion as wholly vicious which is so in any degree and in any direction."[11] It appears as though a change has taken place between the writing of the *Fable* and of Smith's *Theory*, a change that allows capitalist desires to be seen not merely as an evil, albeit a necessary one, but also as an ideal; in fact, however, it is precisely Mandeville's representation of the desire to consume that enables Smith to make these distinctions of degree and direction, that enables him to call some forms of consumerism virtuous and others reprehen-

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sible. Mandeville's tract scapegoats women for consumerism and depicts male merchants as trading merely for the sake of satisfying their wives' vicious desires.

Since consumerism is portrayed as unequivocally evil in Mandeville's *Fable*, one might expect it to be an antimercantile tract.[12] It is not such a tract precisely because the evil consumer it portrays is woman. The *Fable*, subtitled "Private Vices, Publick Benefits," argues that the public benefits from the vicious habits of private citizens; trade is stimulated by the desire for luxury. However, Mandeville formulates the argument so that a *male* public benefits from the private world of evil *women*. The essays or "Remarks" appended in 1714 to Mandeville's original poem explicitly attack women: if the wives who now demand goods from their husbands, it says, were to change suddenly and "behave themselves as a sober wise Man could wish them," "nothing could make amends to the Detriment Trade would sustain" (1:225). The reader must realize, Mandeville asserts,

> that a considerable Portion of what the Prosperity of *London* and Trade in general, and consequently the Honour, Strength, Safety, and all the worldly Interest of the Nation consist in, depends entirely on the Deceit and vile Stratagems of Women; . . . [The virtues women should have] could not possibly be a thousandth Part so serviceable, to make an opulent, powerful, and what we call a flourishing Kingdom, than their most hateful Qualities. (1:228)

In this passage, Mandeville attacks women and condemns consumerism: the desire for things leads women to use "Deceit and vile Stratagems." However, it is by way of this condemnation of women that Mandeville is able to quarantine the vicious part of capitalism in order to idealize the capitalist enterprise of trading: an honorable, strong, safe, opulent, powerful, flourishing kingdom is a trading kingdom, and the activity of trading itself in no way involves the deceit or vile strategems of consuming women. By confining the vicious part of capitalism to the female consumer, the text purifies the merchant's desire to get goods.

Mandeville's *Fable* can distinguish between the abject desire to indulge in luxury and the ideal desire to trade because of its use of the figure of woman: vicious consumerism is female, virtuous mercantilism is male.[13] As René Girard has shown, the scapegoat must be recognizably the same as its ideal counterpart in order for that ideal to be established. Scapegoating must be recognizably arbitrary: that which is to be idealized and its abject counterpart must visibly share those attributes for which the abject will be scapegoated; in order to

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assume any given society's ideals as their own, members must be able to identify both with the ideal *and* with the scapegoated victim who takes the punishment for the ideal's repulsive qualities.[14] To put this in terms of Mandeville's *Fable*, English merchants can only feel wholly good about searching the world for treasures if they can punish women with whom they identify, the consuming women who force their husbands to "rob the State" and "ransack" the Indies in order to get what they want (1:33); it is only through identifying with these vicious women whom they castigate or symbolically murder that merchants can purify and elevate their own motives.

At times, Mandeville's *Fable* reveals the arbitrariness of pinning the vicious desire to consume on the figure of woman. It is either out of love or "out of Vanity," Mandeville says, that some men are "lavish to their Wives, and . . . croud New Clothes and other Finery upon them faster than they can ask it" (1:227). Here, the *Fable* almost recognizes that the female consumer is not always female. Intuitively one might read this moment in the *Fable* as profeminist: women aren't really to blame for consumerism, Mandeville seems to say, men are. But Girard's account offers a counterintuitive reading of this passage: identifying with the abject female consumer allows the proper businessman to successfully disown his own excessive desires by punishing the figure of woman for them. The female consumer must be identical to the male writers and readers who are victimizing her in order to effectively take the blame for their faults. Thus, what appears to be a feminist moment is rather an invitation to identify with the scapegoat for the sake of making that scapegoating process effective.

As the case of consumerism demonstrates, then, works of the Restoration and early eighteenth century engaged in the project of rendering capitalist desires morally respectable are able to degrade and elevate the same passion by splitting it in two, into its ideal male and abject female forms. I will now examine this dynamic in the case of the desire for profit. It makes sense that in its abject female form such a desire would be pinned on prostitutes, profiteers easily degraded. I turn therefore to Mandeville's treatise on legalizing prostitution.

Mandeville's *A Modest Defence of Publick STEWS* (1724) sets up an abject and decidedly female version of the desire to intensify profits which, in a certain degree and direction, is "wholly vicious," so that in another degree and direction, it can be ideal. For this reason, moments in this treatise that appear to be feminist are actually moments when the text invites identification with women in order to better scapegoat them. These feminist ideas and figures are sympathetic pre-

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cisely to the degree that the ideal capitalist appears to readers and writers to be contaminated by abject desires; victimized females are the more sympathetic the more that capitalist investors need to be cleaned off. Anxieties about the excesses of profit-hungry merchants get displaced onto the fear that prostitutes are reaping excessive pleasure as well as too much money. In Mandeville's *A Modest Defense of Publick STEWS*, the rules goes: when anxious because businessmen can control the fate of Spain, regulate the business of bawds.

II

A Modest Defence is a satire on reformers, the same group Mandeville attacked in his "Essay on Charity and Charity-Schools" in 1723. Mandeville writes his treatise on streetwalkers in the character of the "Reformer" "Phil-Porney," a lover of prostitutes.[15] Phil Porney's "Dedication" is addressed to the "Gentleman" of the Reforming Societies whose method of "converting" prostitutes does not seem to be working:

> It would not be amiss, if You chang'd somewhat your present Method of Conversion, especially in the Article of Whipping. It is very possible, indeed, that leaving a Poor Girl Penny-less, may put her in a Way of living Honestly, tho' the want of Money was the only Reason of her living otherwise; and the Stripping of her Naked, may, for aught I know, contribute to Her Modesty, and put Her in a State of Innocence; but surely, *Gentlemen*, You must all know, that Flogging has a quite contrary Effect. (*D*, x–xi)

A Modest Defence of Publick STEWS thus satirizes "the Defence of Modesty and Virtue" (*D*, i) undertaken by reform societies; however, as I will show, it is not so much about reform as it is about business.

Richard Cook maintains that Mandeville seriously proposes state-run prostitution.[16] Cook contends that Mandeville exaggerates the mercantilist position not to parody it but rather for the sake of baiting his opponents. The Grand Jury had condemned the author of The *Fable* a year earlier, saying that Mandeville had endeavored to apologize for and praise "the very *Stews* themselves . . . . with Design, we conceive, to debauch the Nation."[17] However, as Cook recognizes, Mandeville could be satirizing the mercantilist stance: Phil Porney's discussion of the importation of foreign women and the retail price of various kinds of prostitutes might be designed to outrage readers over the alienating effects of mercantile practices. It is always therefore possible to argue that Mandeville exploits what Cook calls the "comic potentialities" of mercantilism in order to satirize it. Like *The Fable*

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of the Bees, which could be read as a rigorist rejection of capitalist values, *A Modest Defence* could be read as an antimercantilist tract.

We can avoid the whole issue of Mandeville's sincerity by reading the text not for his opinions about prostitution and mercantilism, but rather for the ideological work it performs, whether serious or not.[18] There isn't any simple relation between the growth of prostitution and the proliferation of texts on prostitution, nor between mercantile expansion and the use of it as a figure. The Reform Movement and antiprostitution tracts should not be seen as simply a reaction to a preexisting social problem, any more than Whig panegyric depicts a preexisting economic reality. By defining "Vice" and campaigning against it, reformers work toward channeling desire in new ways.

Henry Abelove has suggested that "sexual intercourse so-called," that is, those sexual activities that promote reproduction, "became importantly more popular" during the eighteenth century, and that this popularity accompanied and is in some way connected to the privileging of productivity in profit-intensive economic pursuits.[19] The plan for state-regulated "public stews," Phil Porney asserts, will restore the "Inclination to Matrimony" (*D*, 29). Phil Porney insists that state-run prostitution will increase "the Number of [the State's] Inhabitants" on whom its "Prosperity" (*D*, 5) depends by restoring marriage to its true "Ends and Purposes" (*D*, 30): people will not marry for love, which they can get more easily at the government stew, but rather will marry to propagate (*D*, 26–34). If the Reformers and other prostitution tracts attempt—seriously in their case—not only to inspire young men "to quit the Gaiety of a Single Life," (*D*, 30) but also to persuade them that the function of marriage is propagation, then they may be seen as part of the movement toward privileging production. Abelove does not intend to imply that a rise in reproduction caused a rise in production, or vice versa: "Neither of these causal arguments would seem to me to be sound, and both would of course depend on a too-easy and conventional distinction between the sexual and material realms."[20]

At the level of argument, Mandeville's treatise works toward establishing what is now for us this "too-easy and conventional" distinction between sexual pleasure and business. However, *A Modest Defence* also simultaneously seems to dissolve this distinction: it represents profit-making as sexually pleasurable, ideal in its male form, abject in its female form. Representing the distinction between the two as arbitrary does not dissolve the distinction but works instead to establish it.

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A Modest Defence sets up two kinds of capitalists: Mandeville directly addresses the people to whom he is speaking about regulating prostitution in their capacity as reasonable businessmen, and indirectly figures the women about whom he speaks as abhorrent capitalists. Occasionally obscene, the treatise spends pages describing woman's irrational and overly "eager Pursuit of Pleasure" (*D*, 45–46) in contrast to man's necessary and rational business pursuits. According to the *Defence*, all women essentially want to lose their chastity (*D*, 44, 51) but they manage their "modesty" as men manage property, capital, and credit. Mandeville's *Modest Defence* renders virtuous the capitalist's exorbitant desire for profit by contrasting it with the prostitute's business activity. This contrast forms an arbitrary distinction between good and bad versions of the desire to exploit others for the sake of one's own pleasure. The arbitrariness of it is especially visible when sexual behavior is figured as economic activity and vice versa.

Phil Porney begins his treatise by saying, "mischievous Consequences" do not come from

> Whoring, consider'd in itself, but only proceed from the Abuse and ill Management of it; our Business is certainly to regulate this Affair in such sort as may best prevent [many] Mischiefs. (*D*, 6)

In this projector's mercantilist dream, turning "Private Whoring" (defined by Richard Cook as "rape, seduction, and adultery without the exchange of money") into "Publick Whoring" or prostitution (*D*, 8) by erecting Public Stews will eliminate "the ill Consequences of this Vice" (*D*, 2). But the projector gets lost in his own mercantile zeal. In a way that certainly scandalized most of Mandeville's readers, Phil Porney discusses female prostitutes as commodities, dividing them "into four Classes, who for their Beauty, or other Qualifications, may justly challenge different Prices" and elaborately detailing why one woman should cost "Half a Crown" while another should rate "a Guinea" (*D*, 13).[21] As is visible even in the projector's excess, the ostensible argument is that transforming stews into businesses will promote the public good, and therefore private whoring is at this moment *not* a business. However, the effect of the treaties is to demonstrate that women are already good managers of their most valuable commodity, their feigned or real chastity.[22] Sex is indeed a business, and women are not mismanaging it, but managing it too well.

Mandeville's projector wants to argue that women cannot manage their chastity because in women passion predominates over business-like rationality:

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> In short, there requires no more to convince us of the Violence of Female Desire, when raised to a proper height, but only to consider, what a terrible Risque a Woman runs to gratify it. Shame and Poverty are look'd upon as Trifles, when they come in Competition with this predominating Passion. (*D*, 41)

To further support the treatise's premise that passion opposes financial interest and therefore must be publicly managed, one would think that Phil Porney would go on, from his discourse on the violence of female desire, to describe how women forget their financial interests in the heat of sexual desire. And the treatise does do that to a degree—it is designed to be titillating. However, in Phil Porney's taxonomy of types of women and how they manage their chastity, Mandeville's treatise actually demonstrates that women manage their honor so as to both gratify their passion and serve their financial interest. In fact, at moments during this account of women's maneuvers, financial gain and sexual pleasure become indistinguishable. The most successful businesswoman is (or will become) the most passionate, and Mandeville describes their strategies in economic terms.

Passion, honor, and interest are the three terms used in Mandeville's treatise to perform a surprisingly structuralist analysis of types of women: each of the four types of women is defined by the presence or absence of passion, of a strong desire for honor, and of a strong sense of financial interest. The first type is naturally chaste; this kind of woman desires honor and has little or no passion (*D*, 42). The second type, the woman who values her reputation as much as the first but is naturally amorous—the "Wanton Woman of Honour" (*D*, 45)—tries to maintain her reputation by concealing her amorous escapades. Phil Porney describes these efforts at concealment as trying to buy sexual pleasure on credit: by hiding their sexual encounters, these women try "to purchase Pleasure without the Expence of Reputation" (*D*, 45).

In the passage in which he describes the third type, middling women who want to marry well, Mandeville equates financial interest with sexual desire. These women have neither honor nor inclination; that is, since they do not *yet* have honor (and with it, money), they completely repress their inordinate sexual appetites:

> For when a Woman has her Interest and Fortune depending upon her Reputation, as all the middle Rank of Womankind have, she is a Woman of Honour of course. Interest, indeed, is inseparable from Female Honour . . . . The bare Puncto of Honour, when abstracted from Interest, would prove but a small Rub to Women in their eager Pursuit of Pleasure: Thus we see the Conduct of a Maiden Lady, how much more Circumspect it is whilst her Fortune in

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> Marriage is depending, than afterwards, when that Point of Interest is secured by a Husband. (*D*, 45–46)

This passage deviates from the argument Phil Porney wants to make. He wants to say that female desire is so strong, the only way to contain it is by preventing men from laying siege to it. Here, in contradiction to that contention, a woman's desire is perfectly in tune with her financial interest: she is naturally a woman of honor ("a Woman of Honour of course"), naturally "circumspect," until her "Interest" has been "secured by a Husband." Once comfortably married, however, "let their natural Chastity be ever so great, the smallest Spark of Desire is capable of being blown up and rais'd to a considerable Pitch" (*D*, 46). In other words, for those who have secured their interest through marriage, financial well-being incites desire.

According to *A Modest Defence*, then, all women manage their own desire just as a businessman manages his "Accounts," with a view to procuring the greatest amount of financial gain and pleasure. As the treatise describes their endeavors, pleasure is equated with financial gain by being figured as success in capitalist enterprise. Lower-class women who have no chance of gaining a fortune through marriage "can't promote their Interest by preserving their Chastity, yet, if they have the least Spark of Beauty, they will find their Account sufficiently in parting with it" (*D*, 47). A woman who wants a man to marry her will "bribe his After-Love, by the great Value she seems to put upon her Chastity before she makes him a Present of it" (*D*, 48). A woman who tries to raise the value of her chastity by actually remaining chaste instead of merely resisting temporarily must have "a good Stock of Virtue, [or] an unaccountable Series of good Fortune if she escapes" from passion (*D*, 52).

The most striking and disturbing figure represents men as essentially better capitalists than women because men have penises. A woman's vagina, Mandeville says, is "like a Debtor's House upon the Verge of two Countries, [and so] is liable to be attack'd both Ways; *à parte ante*, & *à parte post*" (*D*, 49). Collecting a debt is here equated with laying siege to a vagina, with rape. In "Commerce with Women" (*D*, 30), a vagina owes and a penis makes it pay.[23] The tropological argument of the text equates profit with sexual pleasure.

The logical argument of a *Defence*, however, pretends that only bawds are merchants driven by passion. It contrasts bawds with the business managers to whom Phil Porney speaks, the men who should take over and run houses of prostitution and who habitually practice "that cool Exercise of [their] Reason" (*D*, 8) unless they are distracted

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by (sexual) desire. At the level of argument, *A Modest Defence* thus explicitly disconnects sexual pleasure from the pleasure of making money. Erecting public whorehouses, the argument runs, will keep businessmen from falling in love and therefore will help business; it will save businessmen from "the Expence [love] occasions, and the Neglect of Worldly Business" (*D*, 22). The sexual desire that rules women and that men can rationally regulate in order to keep themselves fit for business "is quite inconsistent with Industry, the main Support of any, especially a trading, Nation" (*D*, 4). As part of this attempt to separate business from sexual pleasure, women become associated with the realm of leisure in two ways: they are said to be too passionate to take care of their own financial interest, as seen above, and are relegated to objects in the realm of leisure and pleasure. It is through these representations of the figure of woman, therefore, that *A Modest Defence* is able to establish a series of oppositions: "Men of Business" versus "Men of Pleasure" (*D*, 24); industry versus "Indolence" (*D*, 22, 4); business versus leisure (*D*, 26).

Tropologically, as we have seen, the text equates business and sexual activity. It does so for the sake of inviting businessmen to identify with the bawds who will be scapegoated for the desire to exploit others to increase their own pleasure. The whores appearing on Mandeville's pages are filthy embodiments of and containers for the kind of pleasure that one must deny one gets from profit-intensive business management: indolence and pleasure in excess are here figured as sexual pleasure, and sexual pleasure is quarantined, as it were, from the clean concerns of business.[24] At the very moment when the distinction between the drive to obtain sexual pleasure and the desire for financial gain most threatens to collapse, the prostitutes in *A Modest Defence* are "abjected," in Kristeva's sense of the term. They are figured as "dirt": a stew is "a Bog-house," an outhouse; a whore is a piece of "blown" or spoiled meat that "a Modern Butcher . . . hang[s] up for a Cure" to attract the flies away from his fresh meat (*D*, xi). They are insidiously evil: a prostitute has the power to contaminate the businessman, to "drain his Pocket, and make him unfit for any Business" (*D*, 25), to make him contract "a Seminal Weakness" (*D*, 32); furthermore, Mandeville carefully argues, it is really women who spread venereal disease to men, and not vice versa (*D*, 20–22). Here Mandeville's treatise renders the figure of the businesswoman revolting and marshalls horror at her for the sake of making a distinction where one did not exist before, or to shore up a distinction that threatens to

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collapse: in these passages, prostitutes are represented as filthy for the sake of distinguishing business from sexual pleasure.

III

A Modest Defence of Publick STEWS animates the evils to be excluded from the ideal of prudent business management in the figure of the prostitute: women get (sexual) pleasure out of capitalizing, men do not; women capitalize in the service of indolence, men do not.[25] *A Modest Defence* allows the businessman to prosecute a victim recognizably as innocent (or as guilty) as he is, and yet completely other; it allows him to identify with and simultaneously distance himself from, to abject, the evils of an exorbitant desire for profit. The prostitute offers businessmen the perfect opportunity for both identification and disavowal.

A Modest Defence sets businessmen and prostitutes up as identical antagonists: the author speaks to "*lewd Men of Honour*" (*D*, 17) about "a wanton Woman of Honour" (*D*, 45). But there is another way of inviting identification: arousing sympathy for female victims by pointing to the arbitrariness of condemning them. In Mandeville's treatise, there is no subtle transition between passages that recognize the arbitrariness of scapegoating women and those that assert that these women are completely other (that is, that they are deserving victims). Open acknowledgements that condemnation is arbitrary contrast starkly with passages which scapegoat. Thus, Mandeville describes

> *Whoring* as a Kind of Peccant Humour in the Body-Politick, which, in order to its Discharge, naturally seizes upon such external Members as are most liable to Infection, and at the same time most proper to carry off the Malignity. If this Discharge is promoted by a License of *Publick Stews*, which is a Kind of legal Evacuative, the Constitution will certainly be preserv'd. (*D*, 57)

Prostitution is the discharge of infected bodily fluids, a "Virulence" and a "Contagion" (*D*, 58) that threatens to "[seize] upon . . . external Members . . . most liable to Infection"; it is truly revolting. But a page before comparing whorehouses to outhouses and prostitutes to maggot-infested meat, Phil Porney, in what appears to be real understanding and sympathy, admonishes overzealous reformers "that leaving a Poor Girl Penny-less, may put her in a Way of living Honestly, tho' the want of Money was the only Reason of her living otherwise." It is because *A Modest Defence of Publick STEWS* idealizes and abjects

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capitalist desires that real disgust with prostitutes stands in stark contrast to what appears to be real profeminist support of them.

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NOTES

I would like to thank Laura Brown, Wendy Jones, Kate Marsters and Charlotte Sussman for their comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

[1] My account thus fits in with that of "the grotesque body" offered by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1986). Stallybrass and White show how the bourgeoisie "carved out a domain between the realm of kings and the world of the alley-ways and taverns, . . . by forcing together the high and the low as contaminated equivalents, somehow in league with each other and part of a conspiracy of exchange and promiscuity" (109). This process creates "the grotesque body," "a *hybrid* creature trying to straddle the world of popular fairground culture and the 'higher' world of humanistic ethics and ideals" (112). Augustan poetry is simultaneously repelled and fascinated by this body (108–13) which it usually represents as female (109). Fascination and repulsion with, incorporation and expulsion (abjection, in short) of the grotesque body also carves out bourgeois psychic space, a psyche susceptible to discipline (84–85). On abjection, see note 13 below.

[2] As to Mandeville's feminism, see F. B. Kaye, "The Influence of Bernard Mandeville," *Studies in Philology* 19 (1922): 85, reprinted with original page numbers in *Studies in the Literature of the Augustan Age: Essays Collected in Honor of Arthur Ellicott Case*, ed. Richard C. Boys (New York: Gordion Press, 1966); and Gordon S. Vichert, "Bernard Mandeville's *The Virgin Unmask'd*," in *Mandeville Studies*, ed. Irwin Primer (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 1–10.

[3] For an analysis of the problems of a Marxist account of the eighteenth century, see Norma Landau, "Eighteenth-Century England: Tales Historians Tell," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 22 (1988–89): 208–18. One problem with a Marxist narrative is that it cannot account for capitalism taking so long—the whole eighteenth century—to "triumph" (210–11). Landau offers as an alternative Pocock's narrative which allows for ideological and political resistance to or ambivalence about high finance; it takes a long century, in this account, for capitalist values to supplant civic virtues as the predominating ideal. Mandeville's defense of luxury, his utilitarian contention that private vice benefits the public, serious or not, attacks the basic premises of Harringtonian civic humanism in which a healthy government can only result from private virtue. Mandeville can thus be seen as one intellectual attempting to reconcile himself to (or reject, if he is not serious) the moral consequences of high finance. In this essay, I view his work as part of the process of rendering capitalist values intellectually acceptable. For a Pocockian account of Mandeville, see T. A. Horne, *The Social Thought of Bernard Mandeville: Virtue and Commerce in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1978).

[4] On the relation between economics and the construction of sexuality, see Henry Abelove, "Some Speculations on the History of Sexual Intercourse During the Long Eighteenth Century in England," *Genders* 6 (1989): 125–30. Abelove's central speculation is that "the rise in production (the privileging of production) and the rise in the popularity of the sexual act which uniquely makes for reproduction (the privileging of intercourse so-called) may be aspects of the same phenomenon. Viewed from different perspectives, this phenomenon could be called either capitalism or the discourse of capitalism or modern heterosexuality or the discourse of modern heterosexuality" (128). For a more detailed account of how Mandeville's treatises potentially fit into Abelove's account, see below and note 19. On the social construction of sexuality, see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I, An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley

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(New York: Vintage, 1980). Instead of providing a list of works on the social construction of sexuality, I will quote two clear formulations of the question about sexuality generated by Foucault's works on sexuality, discipline, and the relation of truth and power. The first appears in Foucault's "Truth, Power, and Sexuality," in *Subjectivity and Social Relations*, ed. Veronica Beechey and James Donald (Philadelphia: Open Univ. Press, 1985): "What if there were [at the center of 'sexual politics'] not a rejection and an occultation (mystification), but an incitement? What if the essential function of power were not to say no, to forbid, and to censor, but rather to bind coercion, pleasure, and truth according to some indefinite spiral?" (94). Another very clear formulation of the problem of sexuality occurs in Biddy Martin's "Feminism, Criticism, and Foucault" in *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, ed. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1988): "Feminist theorizing, taken as a whole, has gone beyond . . . liberationists' focus on more and better sex to an understanding of sex as the structuring and regulating of desire toward socially and politically oppressive ends" (11). "If women have been marginal in the constitution of meaning and power in Western culture, the question of woman has been central, crucial to the discourse of man, situated as she is within the literary text, the critical text, the psychoanalytic situation, and social texts of all kinds as the riddle, the problem to be solved, the question to be answered. . . . [Instead of] simply substituting new and more correct answers to the question of woman . . . , [we must ask] how are discipline and power constituted at the moment at which woman is made the object of knowledge?" (13–14). Foucault's and Martin's questions are central concerns of this paper. On the relation between anti-feminism and bourgeois individualism, see Ellen Pollak, *The Poetics of Sexual Myth: Gender and Ideology in the Verse of Pope and Swift* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1985). For a specifically Marxist account, see Michelle Barrett, *Woman's Oppression Today: The Marxist/Feminist Encounter* (New York: Verso, 1988).

[5] Laura Brown, "Reading Race and Gender: Jonathan Swift," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 23 (1990): 429.

[6] Jonathan Swift, "A Proposal that All the Ladies and Women of Ireland should appear constantly in Irish Manufactures" (1729), in *Prose Works*, ed. Herbert Davis, 14 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951), 12:121–27, cited and discussed in Brown (note 5), 431. Here, Swift admonishes, "it is to gratify the vanity and pride, and luxury of the women, and of the young fops who admire them, that we owe this insupportable grievance of bringing in the instruments of our ruin," namely "the importation of all unnecessary commodities" (126). On "Whig panegyric" in general, see Laura Brown, *Alexander Pope* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 8–22. Brown (note 5) quotes Addison's celebration of the commodities adorning woman in *Tatler* 116 and discusses its function to mystify the agency and object of mercantilism ("Race," 428–429). In his tribute to woman as "a beautiful, romantic animal" (*Tatler* 116, 5 January 1709–1710), Addison describes all of nature furnishing forth the woman's adornments: the image of nature freely offering itself up stands in place of a description of the process of trade, of English and European merchants violently dispossessing other cultures. In addition to mystifying the agency of mercantilism, Addison's celebration of beautiful women also mystifies the object of the merchant's enterprise: the goal, according to Addison's description, is to adorn women, not to get money. Lawrence Stone in "The New Eighteenth Century," *New York Review of Books* 31 (March 29, 1984), explores various possible ways of accounting for the birth of the desire to buy, including "the rise of new concepts of individualism and materialism," "the herd instinct to imitate," and the "Veblen model of conspicuous consumption" favored by McKendrick (45); see also Neil McKendrick, et al., *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1982). Stone makes some very Mandevillean conclusions about consumerism: "Fashion drove the market. It altered from year to year, almost from month to month, so that suppliers, Josiah Wedgwood for example, were obsessed with the need to keep up with the fickle winds of change in taste." Stone's comment is indebted to *The Fable of the Bees*; Stone thus quotes Mandeville to back up his ideas about fashion ("Luxury

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employed a million of the poor, and odious Pride a million more. Envy itself and vanity were ministers of industry [1:25]"). But Stone does not, as Mandeville and other eighteenth-century writers do, associate "fashion" or "fickleness" with women and feminine fops: "We do not know," Stone points out, "exactly who bought or what really impelled them to do so" (45).

[7] Brown (note 5), 429. This split can be seen in Louis A. Landa's account of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, "Pope's Belinda, The General Emporie of the World, and the Wondrous Worm," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 70 (1971): 215–35. "The lines concerned with Belinda at the toilette," Landa claims, "reflect an ideal which possessed the minds of many economic writers . . . in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (217). However, in debates over importation, "the lady of fashion was frequently the object of criticism, a danger to the national economy . . . , an economic sinner" (226). As Brown (note 5) puts it, "It is only one quick step from the equation of women and commodities to an attack on the hypocritical female as the embodiment of cultural corruption, the visceral epitome of the alienating effects of commodification and the disorienting social consequences of capitalist accumulation" ("Race," 430). On the connection between idealized and demonized images of women, see Pollak (note 4), 5–6.

[8] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), 30.

[9] The poem portion of the *Fable* was first published in 1705 under the title *The Grumbling Hive*. It was republished in 1714 "with a prose commentary of about two hundred pages appended" (Kaye [note 2], 84) and renamed *The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices Publick Benefits*. The *Fable* was reprinted and expanded in 1723, 1724, 1725, 1728, 1729, 1732, and 1733. See Kaye, 84–86, and Kaye's introduction to Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, ed. F. B. Kaye, 2 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1924), hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by volume and page number.

[10] Albert O. Hirschman has written about how the eighteenth century revised Christian categories of sin (Avarice, Pride, and Luxury) into productive social virtues. My account of this scapegoating process fits in well with his discussion of how eighteenth-century writers tried to distinguish between sinful passions and mercantile interests. See *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977).

[11] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759; reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1971), 485, quoted in the appendix to Mandeville (note 9), 2:414.

[12] There is considerable debate over whether Mandeville was a mercantilist on the one hand (T. A. Horne, Jacob Viner), or a proponent of economic liberalism, laissez-faire economics, or economic individualism on the other (Kaye; Albert Schatz sees Mandeville as the first to formulate economic individualism), or finally whether his ideas exist somewhere in between the two positions (Nathan Rosenberg). See Kaye (note 2), 105–7; Jacob Viner, Introduction to Bernard Mandeville, *A Letter to Dion*, Augustan Reprint Society 41 (1723; reprint, Los Angeles: Clark Memorial Library, 1953), 11–14; T. A. Horne (note 3), 66, 70, 106 n. 56, 107 note 74; M. M. Goldsmith, *Private Vices, Public Benefits: Bernard Mandeville's Social and Political Thought* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 123–24; Christopher J. Berry's review of M. M. Goldsmith's *Private Vices, History of Political Thought* 8 (1987): 174–75. Goldsmith views Mandeville as a proponent of "the spirit of capitalism." Everyone agrees that, mercantilist or protocapitalist, Mandeville was for trade, and for the consumerism or "private vice" which stimulated it; it would be possible, however, as Kaye suggests, to see Mandeville as a philosophical "rigorist," a moral absolutist who condemns on moral grounds all worldly commerce (95–98).

[13] By "abject," I do mean miserable and degraded; however, I also mean to refer to the work of Julia Kristeva and her description of sublimation as a dialectical process of abjection and idealization. She describes the concept of abjection in *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia Univ.

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Press, 1982), and its flip side, idealization, in her *Tales of Love,* trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1987), especially in "Freud and Love: Treatment and Its Discontents" (21–56). I have found it useful to think about the dual process of idealization and abjection in the way it was described by Freud ("Repression" (1915), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* ed. James Strachey, 24 vols. [London: Hogarth Press, 1953–1966], 14:146–58). A desire that is objectionable to the conscious mind is rendered conscionable by the following process: the desire is "split" in two, one version of it becoming abhorrent or abject, while a distorted version of it—a version which is actually quite close to the abhorrent one—becomes an ideal. "In this connection," Freud says, "we can understand how it is that the objects to which men give most preference, their ideals, proceed from the same perceptions and experiences as the objects which they most abhor, and that they were originally distinguished from one another through slight modifications" (150). Jonathan Swift describes an amazingly similar process in his *Tale of A Tub* (1710), *Gulliver's Travels and Other Writings,* ed. Louise A. Landa (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), 324–25).

[14] René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred,* trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977). As against what Girard calls our " 'anti-differential' prejudice" (50), our egalitarian belief that the desire to level distinctions incites people to violence, Girard argues that the leveling of hierarchies is as much the cause of violence as its result: "It is not [cultural] distinctions but the loss of them that gives birth to fierce rivalries and sets members of the same family or social group at one another's throats" (49); "perfect equilibrium invariably leads to violence" (51). Identification with another is a hostile act, an usurpation; during the "sacrificial crisis" (51), everyone identifies with everyone else and identity as such, all difference, is lost. Only a scapegoating event, only an action that renders someone or some group different (by being victimized), can put an end to this crisis: in the scapegoating event, "the [crisis-]pattern of each [person fighting] against another gives way to the unified antagonism of all against one" (78). What makes the scapegoating act different from all the other acts of violence which merely escalate the crisis? Scapegoating (or its commemoration in sacrifice) can effectively end (or prevent) violence only "through a delicately balanced mechanism of association": "The proper functioning of the sacrificial process requires not only the complete separation of the sacrificed victim from those beings for whom the victim is a substitute but also a similarity between parties" (39). Identification with the victim is just as essential as absolute difference from it: "If the gap between the victim and the community is allowed to grow too wide, all similarity will be destroyed. The victim will no longer be capable of attracting the violent impulses [that community members feel toward each other] to itself; the sacrifice will cease to serve as a 'good conductor' [of violence], in the sense that metal is a good conductor of electricity" (39). The abject victim must be at an "optimum distance" from—identified with but different from—its socially sanctioned counterpart. As to the problem of identification, then, we can say that the need to establish differences (for example, between moral and immoral business practices) or the need to reassert them at their threatened dissolution (for example, when moral businessmen look too much like immoral criminals) would stimulate a scapegoating event (abjection, in Kristeva's terms); the invitation to identify with the potential victim merely renders it an effective substitute, a lightning rod, so to speak, attracting to itself the violence felt between those who are too much the same. But there is another way to think about the offer to identify, relying on Girard's fundamental insight that sameness and proximity stimulate violence. Establishing new values would require creating the crisis of violent indifferentiation out of which new distinctions can be born. The invitation to identify with another person or group perceived to be absolutely other, the invitation to violent usurpation, would here be extended for the sake of generating a new world, in the *Genesis* sense of the term, *ex nihilo.*

[15] Bernard Mandeville, *A Modest Defence of Publick STEWS* Etc., Augustan Reprint

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Society 162, (1724; reprint, Los Angeles: Clark Memorial Library, 1973), xii, hereafter cited parenthetically in the text, abbreviated *D*. For the attribution of this originally anonymous text to Mandeville, see F. B. Kaye, "The Writings of Bernard Mandeville: A Bibliographical Survey," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* 20 (1921): 455. In "The Authorship of *A Modest Defence of Publick Stews,* Etc." (*Neophilologus* 18 [1933]: 200–203), J. H. Harder maintains that the *Defence* was written by "Lawrence Le Fever." As Richard I. Cook rightly points out, " 'Lawrence Le Fever' . . . sounds suspiciously like another of the punning pseudonyms ('Luke Ogle, Esq.' is another) which were attributed to the *Modest Defence* in its subsequent editions" (" 'The Great Leviathan of Leachery': Mandeville's *Modest Defence of Publick Stews* (1724)," in Primer [note 2], 23). It is surely the joke of this name, Lawrence Le Fever, to which Daniel Defoe refers when he argues against "tolerating Fornication," a view held, he says, by "several *warm* Gentlemen" ("Some Considerations Upon Streetwalkers," 1726 [British Museum; London: University Microfilms, n.d.], 4, emphasis added, cataloged in John Robert Moore, *A Checklist of The Writings of Daniel Defoe,* Indiana University Humanities Series 47 [Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1960], item 485). Defoe's treatise was written to answer Mandeville (see Cook's introduction to Mandeville's *Defence,* viii note 6). It is for this reason that R. S. Crane refutes Harder's contention in a bibliographical entry for Mandeville in Louis I. Brevold, "English Literature, 1660–1800: A Current Bibliography, *Philological Quarterly* 13 (1934): 122–23. This history of attribution comes from Cook, "Leviathan," 23 note 4. Cook translates the name "Phil-Porney" as "Lover of Whores" ("Leviathan," 27). That it is meant to be translated is further suggested by the name appended to Mandeville's 1711 treatise on hypochondria, "Philopirio." Mandeville says in the preface, "In these Dialogues, I have . . . brought my self upon the Stage; . . . I changed [my name] for that of Philopirio, a Lover of Experience, which I shall always profess to be" (*A Treatise of Hypochondriack and Hysterick Passions* (London: Dryden Leach and W. Taylor, 1711), xi; quoted in G. S. Rousseau, "Mandeville and Europe: Medicine and Philosophy," Primer [note 2], 12 note 6; the 1730 edition contains a different preface). Notice that even when Mandeville is stating explicitly that his views are identical to those of his persona, he leaves room for ambiguity: he shall "always *profess* to be" a "Lover of Experience," but is he one?

[16] "Mandeville is perfectly serious in his mercantilist contention that the government ought to set itself up in the brothel business. But serious though he may be, Mandeville is also perfectly aware of the comic potentialities of writing about a subject like prostitution from within a framework of such typically mercantilist preoccupations as quality controls, cost estimates, and product distribution" (Cook, "Leviathan" [note 15], 29–30). Kaye agrees with Cook that Mandeville's proposal to legalize and officially govern "stews," to make them public, is "serious," but on different grounds (Cook, 25).

[17] Cook (note 15) provides the history of Mandeville's *Defence* (Introduction, i–iii; "Leviathan," 22–23). The idea of state-regulated prostitution first appears as a comment ("Remark H") in *The Fable of the Bees*: if the state would allow men to consume "Courtezans and Strumpets," England could then preserve the virtue of its "honest Women" (1:95). In 1723, Mandeville appended his infamous "Essay on Charity and Charity-Schools" to *The Fable of the Bees*. Kaye [note 2] dates 1723 as the beginning of Mandeville's notoriety (87–88): the Grand Jury of Middlesex County condemned *The Fable* as a public nuisance. Mandeville published *A Modest Defence* one year later, in 1724. As Cook points out, Mandeville repeats verbatim the Grand Jury's charge, that he wrote "with a Design to debauch the Nation," in a self-vindicating article in the *London Journal* (10 August 1723; reprinted in *Fable,* 1:385).

[18] "The question of Mandeville's sincerity," Primer [note 2] notes, "is still a lively issue" (xiii). On the problem of Mandeville's seriousness, see Gordon Vichert, review Goldsmith (note 12), *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 20 (1986–1987): 227; Kaye (note 2), 101; Jacob Viner, (note 12), 5, 9–11; and Cook, Introduction (note 15), v. In *A Modest Defence,* Mandeville commends "publick" over "private whoring" because it might

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deter "the murdering of Bastard Infants . . . which, besides the Barbarity of it, tends very much to dispeople the Country. And since the Prosperity of any Country is allow'd to depend, in a great measure, on the Number of its Inhabitants, the *Government* ought [to intervene]" (*D*, 4–5). Is he serious—is Mandeville a *real* Modest Proposer? As Cook points out, this treatise precedes "A Modest Proposal" by five years (Introduction, v).

[19] Abelove (note 4), 127. Abelove examines inadequate attempts to account for the population explosion of the eighteenth century, and shows that the questions we usually ask about fertility are "ideologically determined," partaking of "that essentialism which so disempowers us both as historians and as political beings" (127). Abelove suggests that population growth occurs because "the particular kind of sexual expression which we moderns often name tendentiously 'sexual intercourse' became importantly more popular at that time in England, and so much more popular that by means of that enhanced popularity alone, without any assistance from a decline in mortality, England's population could have doubled in a relatively short span" (126–27). While traditional historians are unable to account for the rise in fertility because they "defensively transform something that ought to be a problem in the history of sexual behavior into a problem in the history of nuptiality," and are consequently unable to correlate it with factors which would enable more people to marry, "the new popularity of intercourse so-called does correlate rather well with a dramatic rise in virtually all indices of production, a rise which the textbooks call the onset of the Industrial Revolution and which as we know distinguished late eighteenth-century England" (128).

[20] Abelove, 128.

[21] On the reaction Mandeville expected from his readers in offering them this scheme, see Cook, "Leviathan," (note 15), 23–26.

[22] Chastity is both something used to buy and something to be bought: it is both currency ("Our Business is to contrive a Method how [men] may be gratify'd, with as little Expence of Female Virtue as possible," [*D*, 62]), and commodity (as when Phil Porney suggests "the Importation of foreign Women" to meet renewed demands, [65]).

[23] I am indebted to Gina Campbell for pointing out that this metaphorical equation of vagina with the home of a debtor reverses an aristocratic one of vagina as the depository of (hereditary) riches that can be found in some of Shakespeare's sonnets and plays. This requires further inquiry.

[24] Am I saying that the kind of pleasure one gets from maximizing profits is sexual? Maybe profit-seeking is the pleasure one takes in violence (which could be a kind of sexual pleasure). But also, maybe the pleasure arising from profit-seeking is figured as sexual in order to make it repressible.

[25] Again, the text overtly argues these things while tropologically undermining them (in more ways than I have had time to discuss here). This rhetorical undermining could in a crisis situation actually shore up and sustain the text's logical claims (see note 14). Since for us such distinctions (between capitalist and sexual pursuits, between innocuous business practices and the alienating effects of commodifying women) have already been established, such visible undermining serves mostly, it seems to me, to make Mandeville's text unreadable: since we do not know whether to weight the tropological or the logical, since both are too prominent, we do not know what he is trying to argue.

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